

period of Edward's reign. Under the auspices of the Protector, Cranmer at last came out of his shell. His Protestant convictions had been steadily growing, though he had been compelled to keep them under restraint and shape his religion in accordance with the will of his imperious master. He was a mild-tempered, cautious, timid man, and had compromised his reputation by his submission to the strong will of a king who could ill brook contradiction. Henry rewarded his pliancy by protecting him against the machinations of enemies like Gardiner and Norfolk to ruin him and send him to the doom of his fellow-reformer, Thomas Cromwell. Compared with Luther or Calvin, he makes but a sorry figure as a reformer under the most self-willed of potentates. Luther was a staunch supporter of princes, but he could speak out like a man against his princely patrons on occasion, and it is impossible to imagine a Luther acting the part of a Cranmer towards Henry VIII. The cautious archbishop shed the old creed in instalments, and the instalments came just when they were called for. This might be moderation ; it looks uncommonly like opportunism. It must be remembered in his exoneration that his full conversion to Protestantism was the work of research and meditation rather than of spiritual experience, and that there was no place at the court of Henry VIII. for a Luther or a Calvin. Even as it was, the breach with Rome and the official version of the English Bible were distinct steps to the goal that Cranmer would fain have reached, but feared to rush. It required all his suppleness to keep his head and his see at a time when others whose beliefs were materially his own were sent to the stake. His was not the martyr spirit, and in order to save his head and his see he had to do some unwelcome and inconsistent things. With the advent of Edward and the Protector he abandoned his reserve and his sophistry for the creed of Luther, and, before the end of the reign, even for that of Calvin. While it is probable that Protestantism could not have been permanently stamped out in England, even by a succession of Henrys, the immediate sequel of its history under Edward clearly shows that it had as yet no firm hold on the nation at large—was, in fact, at this stage a forced plant, whose vigour only assiduous nursing by the government could preserve.